

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
25 February 1963

CURRENT INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Soviet Fishing Port Project in Cuba

1. A Soviet-Cuban agreement of 25 September 1962 provides for extensive Soviet assistance to the Castro regime in developing a fishing industry. The most significant aspect of the agreement is the planned construction of modern port facilities in Havana harbor to service both Soviet and Cuban fishing fleets. Work on the project is slated to begin this month and be completed by the end of the year or early 1964--nearly two years ahead of the original target date. Some Soviet technicians have reportedly already arrived in Havana to begin work.

2. The port facilities could be used to service Soviet naval craft as well as fishing vessels. Available evidence, however, indicates that the project is in fact designed primarily to boost Cuban fish production, and thus its food supply, and to provide a base for expanding Soviet fishing operations in the western hemisphere.

3. Any facility designed for the logistic support of such surface vessels as fishing trawlers could also service submarines. This type of service could include fueling, replenishment of stores, and minor repairs. The only requirements for this trawler harbor to serve submarines, in addition to special equipment and trained personnel, would be water deep enough for a submarine to enter, and dock space where it could moor. A nuclear submarine could also be resupplied at a base in Cuba. It would not be possible to perform any extensive work on the propulsion plant, however, without large numbers of highly trained specialists and a considerable amount of complicated equipment.

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4. The port project was first announced last September during a visit to Cuba by the Soviet Fisheries Minister Ishkov. With the exception of the arrangement for Soviet trawlers to use the port, the agreement is similar to other Soviet aid agreements.

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5. On completion, the port will be able to serve about 130 ships of the Soviet fishing fleet, and some 25 to 30 ships of the expanding Cuban fishing fleet. About 12 to 15 ships will be able to use the port at one time. It will have a freezer plant with a capacity to store 10,000 tons of fish, a plant for processing fish meal, an ice plant, a floating repair dock capable of serving ships up to 2,500 tons, a repair ship, a radio transmitter, and fueling facilities. It is claimed the port will be able to handle 180,000 tons of fish a year, which compares favorably with major fishing ports of the United States.

6. In mid-January 1963 the Cuban government announced the plans were completed and work would begin in February. We have seen no evidence that construction has started. According to a UPI press report last month, Cuba has signed up a British engineer--Alex Scott, described as a refrigeration expert--on a five-year contract to "build" the port. The report said Scott will supervise the entire project, but this seems most unlikely. All available evidence indicates the construction will be supervised by a team of Soviet and Cuban technicians, even though it is possible Scott may be involved in some aspect of the project.

7. The port project is only one part of the Soviet-Cuban fishing cooperation agreements. Moscow is also providing training, both in Cuba and in the USSR, for large numbers of Cuban fishing students. These Cubans eventually will be used to operate the fishing port and to man the Cuban fishing fleet, which

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ultimately is to have some 70 trawlers.

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8. We have no indication, other than references in the US press, that any location other than Havana Bay has been considered.

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